

ARTIFICIAL NAIL AND METHOD FOR APPLYING SAME**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Application Serial No. 09/616,404, filed July 14, 2000 and U.S. Application Serial No. 09/696,879, filed October 26, 2000.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an artificial nail and to a method of applying the artificial nail to a natural fingernail. In particular, the invention relates to an artificial full nail cover and an artificial nail tip that have the appearance of a natural nail once it is applied.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Traditional artificial fingernails are made of an opaque hard, flexible plastic. They are applied over natural nails with an adhesive and then covered with nail polish or a topcoat of clear acrylic. In the case of a nail tip, the seam between the tip and the nail bed is filled with a filler prior to the application of the nail polish or topcoat of clear acrylic. These conventional nails look like natural nails only when covered with polish, because the artificial nails completely obscure the natural nail bed underneath.

Because of the opacity of the artificial nails, a french-style manicure is impossible. A French-style manicure is one in which only the nail tip is colored, (usually white) and the nail bed is left a natural color or tinted only slightly pink. Attempts at a French-style manicure with artificial nails do not look natural, because the opaque artificial nails do not look natural, and because the opaque artificial nail bed portion cannot be made to look like a natural nail bed. In the case of an artificial nail tip, because the seam between the opaque nail tips and the natural nail bed must be filled, the tips cannot be made to look like a natural nail.

Accordingly, it would be desirable to provide an artificial nail that provides a naturally looking French-style manicure and that is easily applied without the need for an experienced nail technician.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is an artificial full fingernail comprising a nail body made from transparent material and having a nail bed portion, a nail tip portion and a dividing line separating the nail bed portion and the nail tip portion. The nail bed portion substantially corresponds to the nail bed of a natural fingernail and is applied over a natural fingernail. The nail bed portion is substantially transparent, whereas
10 the nail tip portion is provided with a continuous opaque decoration. Thus, the transparent nail bed portion allows at least a portion of a natural nail bed to be visible therethrough and the opaque tip portion obscures at least a portion of a natural nail tip when the artificial fingernail is applied over a natural fingernail. This way, the artificial fingernail has the color and appearance of a natural fingernail, which is especially important when doing a french manicure.
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 To give the appearance of a French-style manicure, white paint is preferably applied over the entire nail tip portion. To give an even more decorative appearance, decorative designs can be applied over all or a portion of the nail. Such designs can include airbrushed or printed flowers, birds, or any other designs. These designs are used in addition to the opaque coating that covers the area corresponding to a natural nail tip. It is important that the natural nail tip not be visible through the artificial nail, because the artificial nail would not look natural. Only the natural nail bed is visible through the artificial nail.
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 The artificial nail is further preferably coated with a topcoat of transparent
25 sealer to protect the opaque coating and designs. Thus, the nail comes pre-finished and does not need any additional polish once it is applied to the natural fingernails.

 In an alternate embodiment, an artificial fingernail tip made of a transparent, acrylic material is provided. The fingernail tip comprises an opaque nail tip portion and a transparent base portion. The nail tip base portion corresponds in size and

shape only to the distal end of a natural fingernail and is applied to the tip of a fingernail. Additional opaque decorations can be applied over the nail tip, in any desired pattern, as long as the nail base portion is left substantially transparent. Thus, a French-style manicure can be created by having the nail tip portion of the nail tip covered with a white opaque design. This gives a much more natural appearance than simply applying a fully opaque nail tip to the nail.

The tips are applied to the natural nail with a standard adhesive. Then, clear acrylic or resin filler is placed over the natural nail bed, to create a smooth transition between the clear nail base portion of the tip and the natural nail bed. The filler too is transparent, so the natural nail bed is visible through the filler. A clear topcoat of the acrylic is applied over the entire nail and nail tip, so that the finished nail is smooth, glossy and natural looking. The layer of clear acrylic over the decorations also gives the decorations a very attractive three-dimensional appearance. The acrylic also protects the decorations from scratches and chipping.

The artificial nail cover and tip are preferably made from ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) plastic. However, other materials could also be used.

The invention also includes an artificial fingernail kit, comprising at least ten of the artificial nail covers and/or tips described above, along with a translucent pink adhesive and transparent filler and coating materials. The adhesive is preferably an ethylcyanoacrylate, but other adhesives could also be used. The filler is a standard powder material that is mixed with a liquid solvent and applied to the nail with a brush. The filler then quickly hardens into a transparent solid coating.

The invention also involves a method of applying artificial fingernails, comprising applying the translucent pink adhesive to the artificial nail described above, and placing the artificial nail over a natural nail, so that the natural nail bed is visible through the artificial nail and the adhesive. In the case of a nail tip, a transparent acrylic filler is applied over the natural nail bed to create a smooth transition to the tip, and the filler material is also applied in a layer over the entire nail and tip to give a smooth glossy top coating to protect the nail tip and decorations.

5 The present invention has the advantage over traditional nail tips in that it provides a clear nail bed portion allowing the natural nail bed to be visible therethrough. By pre-applying the opaque coating and the designs to the tip, the present invention reduces the costs in having the designs applied directly to a finger while in a nail salon. Also, the transparent outer coating over the nail tip gives the designs an attractive three-dimensional appearance. Finally, the artificial nail tip according to the invention requires little or no filing after application, because the base of the nail tip is transparent and invisible after it is applied to the natural nail bed and filled.

10 As a result of the present invention, an artificial nail and a method for applying the nail is provided, in which the natural nail bed is visible through the artificial nail, and the entire nail looks as if it were a natural nail. The artificial nail can be easily applied by a consumer without the need for an experienced nail technician. Additionally, the artificial nail is simple and inexpensive to manufacture. 15 Alternatively, an artificial nail tip and a method for applying the nail tip is provided, in which the natural nail bed is visible through the artificial nail tip, and the nail tip looks as if it were part of the natural nail.

20 Other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in connection with the accompanying drawings. It is to be understood, however, that the drawings are designed as an illustration only and not as a definition of the limits of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

25 Fig. 1 shows a top view of the artificial full nail cover according to the invention.

Fig. 2 shows a side view of the artificial full nail cover as applied to a natural fingernail.

Fig. 3 shows a schematic cross-sectional view of the layers of natural nail, adhesive, artificial full nail cover, opaque coating and outer coating according to the invention.

Fig. 4 shows a top view of an alternate embodiment of the artificial full nail cover according to the invention.

Fig. 5 shows a side view of the alternate embodiment of the full nail cover shown in Fig. 4

Fig. 6 shows a top view of another alternate embodiment of the present invention in the form of an artificial nail tip.

Fig. 7 shows a side view of the artificial nail tip of Fig. 6 as applied to a natural fingernail but without the filler and topcoat.

Fig. 8 shows a schematic cross-sectional view of the layers of natural nail, artificial nail tip, opaque coating, filler and outer coating according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now in detail to the drawings, Figures 1-3 show an artificial full nail cover 10 according to the invention. Artificial nail cover 10 is made of a transparent plastic material. The cover 10 is preferably made of ABS plastic, which can be trimmed and filed to a desired size and shape. The cover 10 includes a nail bed portion 11, and a nail tip portion 12. The nail bed portion 11 of the full nail cover 10 substantially corresponds to the full nail bed 21 of a natural fingernail and is applied over the nail bed of a natural fingernail. When the nail bed portion 11 is the same approximate size and shape of a full nail bed of a natural fingernail, the dividing line 13 between bed portion 11 and tip portion 12 corresponds to a transition line 23 of a natural nail from natural nail bed 21 to natural nail tip 22. In that case, the transition line 23 generally corresponds to the end of the finger 20 and the natural nail tip 22 is that portion of the natural nail that extends beyond the end of the finger.

Tip portion 12 is decorated with a continuous opaque decoration. "Continuously opaque" as used herein means decorations (primarily by way of color

or shade) which have no breaks or discontinuities. Thus, tip portion 12 can be painted with an opaque paint 15, e.g. white, to resemble a French-style manicure, whereas the bed portion 11 remains substantially transparent. However, additional designs 14 may be applied over the bed portion 11 and tip portion 12 to enhance the nail's appearance so long as the bed portion 11 is left substantially transparent.

In an alternate embodiment, as shown in Figures 4 and 5, the dividing line 13a between the bed portion 11 and the tip portion 12 is slanted in relation to the transition line 23 of the natural nail. In other words, the dividing line 13a begins on one side of the cover 10 at the transition line 23, but as the dividing line crosses the cover, it extends inwardly into the natural nail bed 21. Here too, the tip portion 12 is painted with an opaque paint 15, preferably white, whereas the bed portion 11 remains substantially transparent to give a modified French-style manicure appearance.

To apply nail cover 10 to a natural fingernail, a translucent pink adhesive 18, shown in Figure 3, is applied to the nail bed portion 11 of the cover 10 in a conventional manner. The adhesive is preferably an ethylcyanoacrylate, but other adhesives could also be used. Nail cover 10 is then placed on the natural nail bed 21 on finger 20, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. The natural nail tip 22 extends out under tip portion 12, but it is not visible through the cover 10 due to the opaque nail tip portion 12. However, because the nail bed portion 11 is substantially transparent, the natural nail bed 21 is visible through the bed portion 11. In this way, artificial nail cover 10 resembles a natural nail. Preferably, a transparent topcoat sealer 16 is applied over the entire artificial nail for protection.

Referring now to Figures 6-8 an alternate embodiment of the present invention in the form of an artificial nail tip 30 is shown. The artificial nail tip 30 is similar to the full cover 10 shown in Figures 1-5, however, the tip is applied only to the outer end of the natural nail bed 21 as shown in Figures 7 and 8. Artificial nail tip 30 is also preferably made of a transparent ABS plastic and comprises a nail tip portion 31 and a base portion 32. The base portion 32 of the tip 30 corresponds in size and shape only to the distal end of the natural nail bed 21 and is applied to end of the nail bed 21 and the tip 22 of a fingernail. Again, the tip portion 31 is coated with an opaque paint

33 to resemble a French-style manicure, whereas the base portion remains substantially transparent. Separating the tip portion 31 and the base portion 32 is a dividing line 34, which corresponds to the transition line 23 of the natural nail from natural nail bed 21 to natural nail tip 22. Here too, the dividing line 34 may be askew to the transition line 23, as discussed above and shown in Figures 4 and 5, and decorative designs 35 may be applied over the tip portion 31 and the base portion 32 by air brushing or other means.

As shown in Figure 8, the nail tip 30 is attached to a natural nail with an adhesive so that the tip extends just into the natural nail bed 21, to create the look of a long natural fingernail. At this point, a translucent acrylic filler 36 is applied over the natural nail bed 21 to create a smooth transition to nail tip 30. The filler 36 is a standard powder material that is mixed with a liquid solvent and applied to the nail with a brush. The filler then quickly hardens into a transparent solid coating. The entire natural nail and nail tip 30 are then covered with a layer of translucent acrylic 37 to give a glossy attractive appearance and to enhance the look of design layer 32.

Similar to the nail cover 10 described above, the natural nail bed 21 is visible through the nail tip 30 because the base portion 32, the filler 36 and the outer acrylic layer 37 are all transparent. Likewise, because the tip portion 31 is opaque, the natural nail tip 22 is obscured when the artificial nail tip 30 is applied. The result is a beautiful looking nail in the form of a French-style manicure that appears very natural and attractive.

The pre-fabricated covers 10 and tips 30 can be provided to the consumer as part of a kit for adorning fingernails. Preferably, at least ten covers 10 and ten tips 30 are provided along with an amount of transparent adhesive, filler and top coating. The covers 10 and tips 30 provided in the kit will vary in size according to the different sizes of natural fingernails. A nail file and additional decorative decals can also be provided in the kit.

Although the illustrative embodiments of the present invention have been described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to those precise embodiments and that various other

changes and modifications may be effected therein by one skilled in the art without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention.

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